

West Virginia's Pickle Lady Expands Business with SBWF Help

Jill Brookover has been best known for the selection of appetizing pickles she creates at Sunny Hollow Farms in Auburn. This year West Virginia's pickle lady decided to expand her business with new product lines including easy-to-use sauces, baking goods and seasonings.

"Sunny Hollow Farms worked hard to develop an expanded line of products that even the most harried or inexperienced cook can use to make every meal taste special," Brookover said. "With three daughters, I know what it's like to be stressed. Add a full-time job, and you've got one rushed woman. These items help moms on the go provide tasty dishes in very little time."

To help her prepare for the increase in sales the expansion would bring, Brookover contacted the Small Business Work Force program for training assistance.



With SBWF grant assistance, Sunny Hollow Farm Owner Jill Brookover learned how she could use Web site design elements, search engine optimization, content management systems, MySQL databases and advanced Excel to improve her online business. *Photo Courtesy of J. Alex Wilson/WV Development Office*

Small Business Work Force (SBWF) gives small businesses a competitive edge by providing access to quality workforce training and raising the skill level of West Virginia's small business workforce. The program reimburses pre-approved technology, technical and regulatory compliance training. Most small businesses are eligible for up to \$5,000.

"The SBWF grant for custom Web site design training from Absolute Web Designs helped me improve and maintain the Sunny Hollow Farms' site and accommodate an expanded customer base," said Brookover.

Absolute Web Designs used an interesting mix of instruction techniques: individual and group instruction, Web-based instruction, teleconferencing and independent study. Brookover learned how she could use Web site design elements, search engine optimization, content management systems, MySQL databases and advanced Excel to improve her online business.

The Web site will help her sell the new expanded product line, which includes Nonna's Italian Sauce (named for Brookover's great-great-grandmother), a dry spice mix that can be added to fresh tomatoes for a traditional Sicilian tomato

sauce. New products include a West Virginia-Style Horseradish sauce and a Shiitake mushroom sauce.

“I’ve also come up with a number of sauces that dress up any plain dessert, including two chocolate sauces and a caramel sauce we call Crème Brulee,” Brookover said. “Everything is good enough to eat straight out of the jar.”

New baking goods include cookies and cakes that can go from the bag to the table in 40 minutes or less. “With most, you just add water. It doesn’t get any simpler than that,” said Brookover.

“We’ve also added a whole line of seasonings that can dress up even the plainest fare,” Brookover said. “These include our Herb Garden seasoning, which combines basil, garlic, onions and select herbs straight from the garden; Smokehouse Seasoning, a blend of ham hock and onions; and Sweet Fire, a dry rub that mimics the flavors of Chinese mustard with a country time flair.”

The SBWF is a program of the Small Business Development Center (SBDC). The SBDC is a division of the West Virginia Development Office and works with colleges, universities and other host institutions to provide free business consulting and technical assistance at 15 statewide locations. The SBDC is a program supported by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and extended to the public on a non-discriminatory basis. The SBA cannot endorse any products, opinions or services of any external parties or activities. Workshops, seminars and conferences are held in disabled accessible locations. Arrangements for people with disabilities will be made if requested in advance.